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# The Impact of US-Backed Counternarcotics Programs on Andean Cocaine Countries

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Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

Key Judgments

*Information available as of 10 May 1989 was  
used in the preparation of this Memorandum,  
approved for publication on that date by the  
Chairman of the National Intelligence Council.*

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*The following intelligence organizations participated  
in the preparation of these Key Judgments:*

The Central Intelligence Agency  
The Defense Intelligence Agency  
The National Security Agency  
The Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

*also participating:*

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army  
The Office of Intelligence, the Drug Enforcement Administration  
The Office of Intelligence, the US Customs Service

*The full text of this Memorandum is being published separately  
with regular distribution.*

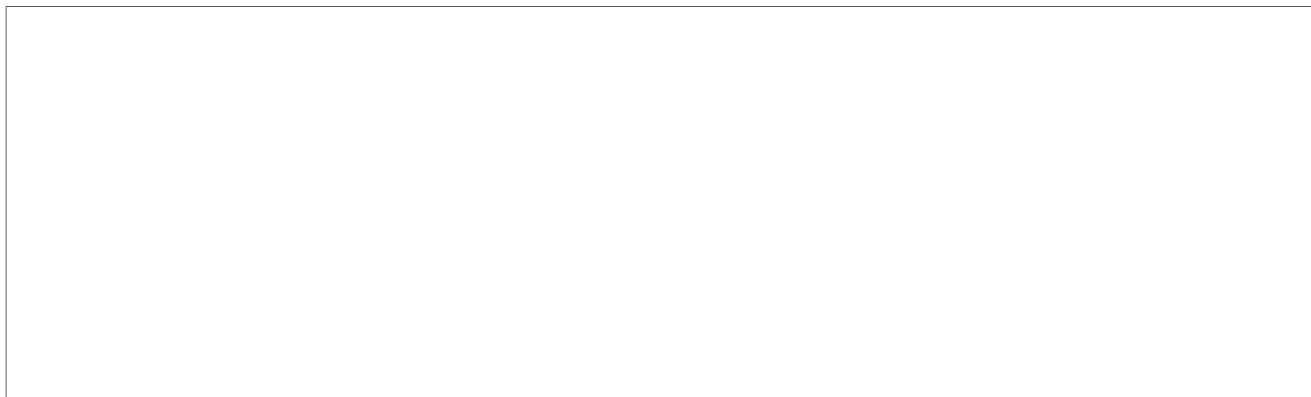
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## **The Impact of US-Backed Counternarcotics Programs on Andean Cocaine Countries**

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- *US-backed counternarcotics efforts, despite modest successes, have not significantly disrupted cocaine production and distribution from Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru.*
- *A cutoff of US counternarcotics assistance would lead to even more cocaine production and would cause current counternarcotics programs to lose what momentum they now have.*
- *No Andean government is likely to install more effective counternarcotics programs without massive, sustained US assistance.*
- *Such measures as extradition of nationals or the widespread use of herbicides will lead to increased danger for US personnel in the region.*

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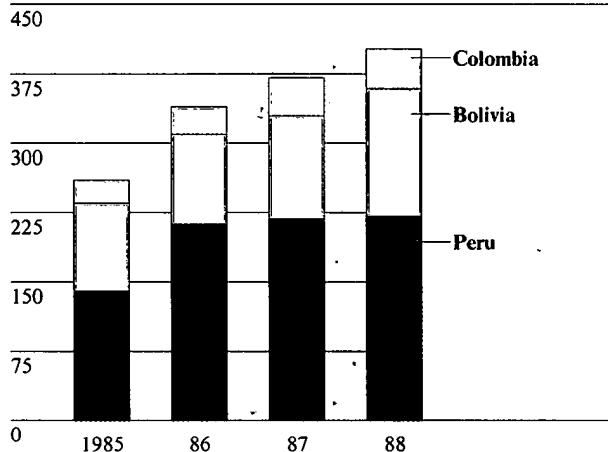
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## Cocaine Production in the Andean Countries

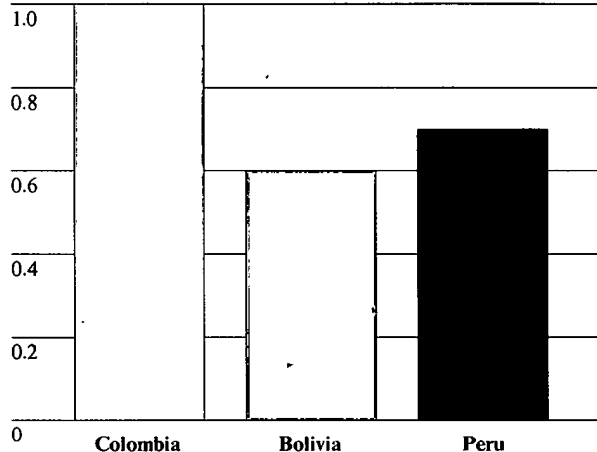
*Net cocaine production steadily increases<sup>a</sup> . . .*

*Metric tons*



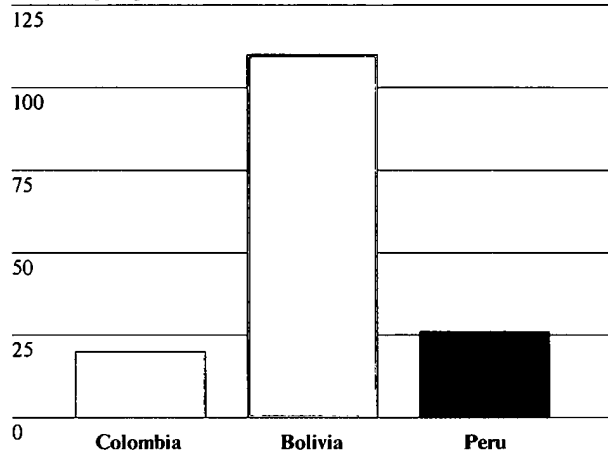
*earning billions each year.*

*Billion US \$, 1988*



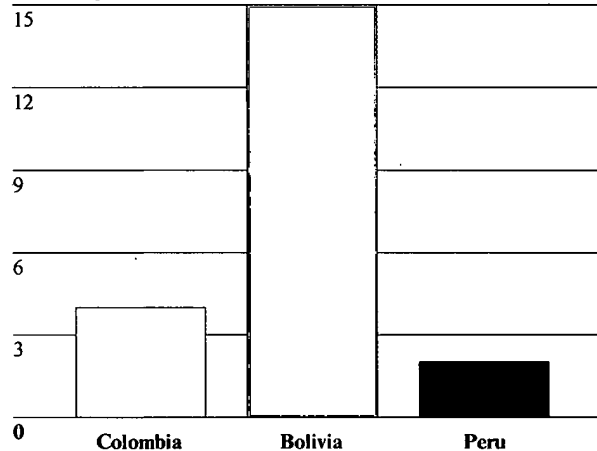
*Rivaling legitimate exports . . .*

*Percent of exports, 1988*



*contributing to the Andean economies.*

*Percent of GDP, 1988*



Note: All data are approximations.

<sup>a</sup>Based on potential yield from coca leaf.

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## Key Judgments

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Since 1980, the United States has provided \$166 million in counternarcotics assistance to Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, but this aid has been insufficient to slow the growth of the Andean cocaine trade. Coca cultivation has more than doubled, and, in the United States, cocaine prices remain low and priority levels high—an indication of abundant supplies.

In the absence of substantial, continuing assistance from the United States, we believe it unlikely that the United States can persuade the three Andean governments to institute more effective counternarcotics programs during the two-year time frame of this assessment:

- Political leaders fear the growing power of the drug traffickers and the dangerous backlash that more effective enforcement would cause.
- Many enforcement and judicial officials have been intimidated or corrupted.
- The three governments are suspicious of herbicidal eradication because of ecological and political concerns.
- Military leaders are reluctant to enter the fight against drugs; they fear the corruption that goes with it and its impact on traditional military missions.

Reactions to stepped-up counternarcotics efforts will vary from country to country. For example, Bolivia and Peru will view an effective eradication program as destabilizing unless dislocated coca growers receive an economic cushion. Colombia, for example, fears that a direct attack on the drug leaders would escalate the wave of terror that has already killed dozens of political leaders, law enforcement officials, and journalists.

Andean cocaine traffickers, who operate in a region five times the size of Texas, easily evade counternarcotics efforts. If interdiction operations increase in one area, they move their operations to another. They will increase bribes to law enforcement personnel, judges, politicians, and military officers. If bribes are not enough, well-armed traffickers—often far better equipped than antidrug forces—will step up intimidation and violence against both host government officials and US antidrug personnel.

Colombia and Peru face dual threats from insurgent groups and traffickers. Guerrillas and traffickers are often at odds, but sometimes they cooperate. Military leaders in both countries cite greater insurgent involvement with drug trafficking to justify their efforts against the narcotics trade. Thus they view a more active antinarcotics role on their part as a way to obtain US assistance. Senior Peruvian officers also fear that enhanced drug control efforts will forge closer ties between traffickers and guerrillas, further threatening Peruvian stability.

Andean leaders will continue to resist a large and conspicuous US role in the war against drugs in their countries. Even a semblance of US "clientism" arouses major opposition. All three Andean countries will oppose the widespread use of active-duty US military personnel.

Greater US involvement in counternarcotics efforts in the Andean region will heighten the danger to US personnel there. Traffickers view most of the counternarcotics measures implemented thus far as an acceptable cost of doing business. But steps that would threaten the uneasy balance between government and trafficker—for example, extradition of nationals or the widespread use of herbicides—are the very ones that will lead to violence and greater threats to US personnel.

A cutoff of US counternarcotics assistance would have negative consequences. It would:

- Remove the primary incentive for Andean leaders to risk implementing stronger enforcement programs.
- Reinforce perceptions in the three Andean countries that Washington's battle against drugs is not serious.
- Heighten tensions over the impact of perceived US interventionism to date.
- Damage US credibility in regional and international forums.
- Anger European allies, who are feeling the impact of an increased flow of drugs from the Andean countries.
- Lead to more cocaine production as Andean drug interdiction and eradication programs become totally ineffective.



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